

# Storm Country Polly

by Grace Miller White

and finished, "no place for a decent girl."

Stunned by the flood of disaster that had overwhelmed her, Polly watched Robert Percival lead his cousin from the hut. After the first wild impulse to tell him the truth, she had made no further effort to clear herself.

Evelyn Robertson was going to hold her to the word she had made two years ago! Being innately honest herself, Polly could see no way to lighten her own dejection or to still Robert's fierce anger. Her little world was tumbling to pieces around her. No longer could she think of him as her own, though but a few short minutes before he had comforted her with his kisses and promises. He had demanded that she should trust him, yet at the very first trial of his faith, he had flung away and left her alone.

Blinded by tears, she felt her way to the cot. Bennett lay in the same position, his wide-open eyes holding an expression of horror.

"She's got a lily liver all right, Oscar," Polly blurted through her teeth. "Did you hear all that said?"

Such is the power of habit over a nature like the squatter girl's that Robert faded from her mind, and Oscar Bennett, suffering and dying, absorbed her whole attention.

"Can't you hear anything, Oscar?" she questioned. "Listen, maybe you'll get well. If you do, take your own mummy an' get out quick. We ain't worth one of your toe nails. You've been a mean duffer, Oscar, but you're too d--n good for her. God, but she was a wicked woman, wasn't she, huh?"

Not a move of the heavy head on the pillow gave evidence that she had been heard.

She was still standing by Bennett's side when, without knocking, Robert opened the door and came in, followed by the doctor. Polly recognized the stranger instantly as the medical man who lived a short distance down the boulevard. In anxious inquiry she glanced at Percival.

Observing that she had been weeping, his anger flared again. It never occurred to him that his own cruelty had drawn the tears from her eyes. There was the huge farmer stretched out on the bed; and the squatter girl crying beside him! She was mourning over the stricken man! Robert frowned; and hopelessly, in silence, Polly moved aside to give the doctor the space she had occupied.

After a hasty examination of the patient, Doctor Bacon turned to Polly Hopkins.

"Something struck him," he said shortly. "You've been quarreling with him, eh, girl? What did you hit him with?"

Accusation rang against her not only in the speaker's tones but in Robert's inarticulate cry.

"Why did you strike him, Polly Hopkins?" he demanded hoarsely. "Did you? Speak! Did you?"

That he should believe such things of her crushed her completely. Her head fell forward, but not until Robert spoke again harshly did she answer.

"Nope," she breathed. Her tongue felt as if it were covered with ashes. "Nope, I didn't hit him!"

That was all she said. She looked up at him pleadingly through her thick lashes. Perhaps he did not really believe her guilty. Yes, he did! He was still fixing upon her that accusatory gaze.

"He'd better be moved out of this hole," observed the doctor, looking around, "but it's an awful night." He considered a moment and then added: "I'll telephone to Ithaca for an ambulance."

Sternly he directed a look of disgust at Polly. He hated attending the squatters anyway, and never would have consented to enter the Silent City if Robert Percival had not come for him.

Aghast at the horror of the emergency, Polly seemed not to notice the physician's contempt.

"In he goin' to die, mister?" she queried plaintively.

"I don't know," he replied in gruff indecision, as he prepared a draught. When everything within human power had been done for Oscar Bennett, Robert allowed the doctor to pass out of the hut before him. Then, like a shot, he turned back to Polly's side. His eyes blazed with jealousy; and quickly it crossed her mind that he was going to strike her. Oh! How she wished he would and then take back all the cruel words he had hurled at her!

"When you said you loved me, you lied," he galled savagely. "You knew all the time you had him. You let me kiss you! You said love was the greatest thing in the world—Oh, God! How I wish I could hate you!"

Polly could not speak, neither could she move. Imprisoned tragedy lay in the depths of her eyes. If he had been less violent, she would have implored him to trust her.

Percival really hoped she would resent his accusations. Stormy denials would have been sweet music to his ears. He would have welcomed even a torrent of abuse from her. Anything was less maddening than this sinister silence that seemed to put the stamp of truth upon his cousin's explanation of Bennett's presence.

Kindful of the man on the bed, he showered kisses upon her hair, her eyes and lastly sealed her lips by his passionate caresses.

"Trust me!" she gasped. "Please trust me."

A contemptuous laugh fell from him. "Trust you?" he grated. "That I will not! I'll never trust you again. But you're mine just the same. Do you hear? You belong to me. But after this I'll watch every step you take and—"

He almost crushed her into unconsciousness, and she hung in his arms a fragile, beaten thing, too tired to cry out, too weak to plead.

Then, all of a sudden, Robert loosened his hold upon her, strode to the door and, without a backward glance, opened it and was gone.

For a long time after he had left the hut, prone upon the rough shanty boards, she strained her eyes at the door, as if a ghost had just passed through it.

Granny Hope's voice called her name; and she came limping out of her room on her stick.

"I heard a lot of folks talkin', Polly," she said, "an' I got awful pains tonight. It's the storm, I guess."

Almost exhausted, Polly forced herself to stand up.

"You hadn't ought to be out of bed, Granny," she remonstrated. "Yep, I guess it's the rain what makes you ache."

Then Mrs. Hope noticed Bennett. His eyes gazed at her a moment and then moved back to Polly.

The old woman hobbled to the cot, and Polly came to her side silently.

"He's awful sick, I guess, ain't he?" observed Mrs. Hope, looking up into the girl's face.

"Yep!" The affirmative was but a breath.

"Goin' to die, huh?" whispered the other.

A deep sob rose to the girl's lips, brought almost to utterance by her intense suffering.

"Mebbe" was all she could say.

"Poor man," the woman muttered, wringing up her face. "Dyin' awful hard thing for some folks."

A startled expression, smoothing away some of the hard lines, spread over Oscar's face. In the presence of death, which every squatter held in superstitious awe, Polly dropped down upon her knees beside the bed. Her own hurt had been overcome by the desire to help him if she could. And there, while the rain dashed its

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fury into the lake, and the wind shook the shanty, the three kept quiet vigil. Large drops appeared on Bennett's brow; and Granny Hope lifted one withered hand and brushed them away.

"Love'll carry you over weary places, big dear," she wheezed. "It's all powerful, love is, air."

Oscar's staring eyes lost something of the object fear they had shown, as if he had heard and was comforted. Then over his face swept that look that comes but once to any man.

"Aw the Christ'll help you, too, honey," Granny Hope went on again smiling.

Polly, weeping silently, bent forward and gazed hard at the dying farmer. Oscar wanted to stay a little longer. He was trying to speak; but she knew he could not. To help him through the valley of shadows and upward into eternal light, she thrust her head close to his.

"Jesus is givin' you rest, Oscar man!" she whispered.

Polly's sobbing voice penetrated into the young man's darkening sensibilities, and the ghost of a smile crept to his lips. Then slowly his eyes closed. The strained muscles relaxed from about his mouth, leaving it more boyish; and thus did the Storm Country give back to Evelyn Robertson her freedom.

After that came dark days for Polly. Even the reproduction of The Greatest Mother in the World, which hung in its accustomed place on the shanty wall, failed to lift the heavy load that rested like a stone in her bosom. No more did she stand before it and dream—dream of a deep-toned voice telling her of love and a future, dream of Robert's arms about her and her head pressed against him.

Up and down she went through the Silent City, unable to smile, well nigh

unable to speak a word of greeting to those she met. So sympathetic were her squatter friends that many a fish and pan of baked beans found their way into the Hopkins hut.

Several times Polly had made an effort to see Evelyn, but the rich girl never appeared as the little trill sounded just after nightfall in the Robertson garden.

In July came rumors that Evelyn Robertson was to marry Marcus MacKenzie; and that he had bought the Bennett farm of Oscar's heirs. Terrified whispers went from mouth to mouth in the settlement that he had boasted how he was going to clear the squatters from the Silent City before the coming of Christmas.

One night the dark messenger to whom no home is closed slipped into the Hopkins shanty and summoned Granny Hope. Although the absence of the old withered woman made one less to feed, Polly missed the oft repeated assurance that somehow, some time, love would make crooked things straight.

Late one day, she took Jerry and the little goat and walked through the Silent City and on toward the Bad Man's Ravine. The picture she had grown to love in those long-ago spring days still gazed out at her from Marcus MacKenzie's fence.

There for a moment Polly halted and solemnly contemplated the beautiful face. When she had been happy, and that was ages past, she had not realized what the call in the mother-plea meant. But as one after another, her loved ones had dwindled away, and none but Jerry was left, a clearer understanding took possession of her. The same cruel force had attacked her and the woman there. They were living in a warring world, trying by might and main to cling to their own. Polly, and this giant mother. The woman asked aid for her vast army of sick sons; and Polly's sorrow, touched by her broad compassion, lightened a little.

Behind her she heard footsteps. Slowly she turned her head; and almost at the same instant the person stopped. Polly could not move or force a word of greeting from her tongue, for Robert Percival was looking at her, his serious white face holding no hint of smile or welcome. For a long minute they stared at each other; then the young man swung about swiftly and strode away.

Crushed almost into insensibility, Polly sank lower and lower until Jerry slid away from her shoulders to the ground. Her beloved had not spoken, nor had the pained lines about his mouth softened even a little bit!

Afternoon shadows began to stretch long over the lake and crowd down upon the Silent City, and still the squatter girl knelt and wept out her sorrow and loneliness with no one near but the large-eyed, sad little child, leaning across the thin back of Billy-goat Hopkins.

At length Polly arose, wiping her worn face on her sleeve. Then she hoisted Jerry to her shoulders and turned for a last look at the lofty mother of the world.

For a minute she gazed steadily. And then, through the gathering gloom, she thought she saw a smile hovering about the beautiful mouth. Polly went nearer by two steps. The woman was smiling at her, and the squatter girl, overwhelmed with a joy that hurt keenly like a knife's blade, smiled back, the first smile since Granny Hope had left her.

Holding Jerry by one arm, she thrust the other hand upward.

CHAPTER XII

Midsummer was full upon them; and still Polly and Jerry held to their lonely tenure of the hut. A few heart-broken letters had reached the squatter girl from Auburn, and she had painstakingly answered them. Yet in spite of the daily predictions of the squatter folks that Old Marc would shortly begin again to harass them, Polly was happier. She could not have explained, if she had been asked, why the agony of doubt had given place to a warmer glow about her heart when she thought of Daddy Hopkins. Away off up there in the gloom of the prison, he had received a mother's benediction. Polly believed this with all her soul. Jerry and she too had come in for their share; and this new confidence lifted the shadow from her eyes a little and lessened the stabbing hurt in her side.

The thing that tormented her most was Jerry's constant mourning for his father. Day by day she had racked her brains for ways to amuse him, but as soon as the novelty of the play had worn off, the old-time cry would begin:

"Want to play horse wif my Daddy Hopkins! Wee Jerry wants Daddy Hopkins!"

She was looking at him one morning after one of his spells of weeping, and wistfully considering if there might be a way to hurry him off to Auburn for a day, when Evelyn Robertson suddenly appeared in the shanty door.

For a long time Evelyn's conscience had made her uncomfortable. Even though her days were exceedingly busy, the remembrance of the squatter girl's pale, pleading face tormented her, and she was fearful Polly might not keep the promise she had made, and Marcus MacKenzie would be lost forever.

So astounded was Polly Hopkins to see her that she could not speak.

A DISPATCH from Washington reports that the U. S. will seek air supremacy. After a political campaign most of the suffering public are agreed that we have achieved this end in the "hot air" field at least.

FOR SALE—40 acres of land; stock and chickens; 4 miles of town. Inquire at 425 N. Washington Street, Mexico, Mo.

Clark Gibbs is in Colorado Springs.

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Choice of all Canton Crepe and Crepe de Chine Sport Dresses \$14.95

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Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Pryor, Miss Hattie Pryor, and Miss Benson Botts left Friday for a motor trip to the Ozarks. They will return Thursday.

Novelty Suits Values up to \$25.00 Special \$9.75

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Mr. and Mrs. C. P. Arnold and sons spent Sunday in Troy.

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## COMING TO

Mexico, Mo.

The Physician on Chronic Diseases Will Visit Our City.

Wednesday, August 16

And Will Be at the Alamo Hotel Until 1 p. m., 1/2 Day ONLY.

Dr. Potter of 3108 Garfield Ave., Kansas City, Mo., who has treated thousands of patients with electricity and medicine, will give consultation, examination and all the medicines necessary FREE. All parties taking advantage of this offer are requested to state to their friends the result of the treatment.

Treats DEAFNESS by an entirely new process.

Treats catarrh, throat and lung disease, eye and ear, stomach, liver and kidneys, gravel, rheumatism, paralysis, neuralgia, nervous and heart disease, epilepsy, Bright's disease, diseases of the bladder, blood, skin, goiter, stammering and asthma.

Piles and rupture, without detention from business.

If you are improving under your family physician do not take up our valuable time. The rich and the poor are treated alike. Idlers and curiosity seekers will please stay away. Our time is valuable.

Remember, NOT A PENNY will be charged for the medicine required to all those taking treatment this trip. Office hours 8 a. m.

Positively married ladies must be accompanied by their husbands. Remember the date, Wednesday, Aug. 16 at the Alamo Hotel until 1 p. m., one half day only, Mexico, Mo.

d&wlt Advertisement

THE price of coal has soared and if the strike is not definitely settled at once the price will continue to become higher and the assurance of suffering from lack of sufficient fuel will become a certainty. As it is if the strike should end today the matter of supplying the nation with needed fuel will be a serious question.

Miss Helen Howell is spending a month's vacation here with her father, John W. Howell. Miss Howell has been attending Kansas University for the past eleven months, and has accepted a position as teacher of Home Economics in the Kansas City schools for the coming term. Her many Mexico friends are glad to hear of her success.

THE prohibition law must stand if the welfare of the country is to be served. The way to make it stand is to prove that it is essential to such welfare. A splendid start has been made in this direction; let the work be continued.

THE chautauqua the latter part of August promises to be exceptionally fine this year. The advance sale of tickets should be started early and there should be no trouble of disposing in advance of the required number to assure the guarantee. The Chautauqua is a great community educational institution and the Redpath-Vawter program is the best to be found anywhere in this section. Mexico is indeed fortunate to have them booking the local chautauqua and should co-operate in making this splendid week a success.

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## W. A. NEWKIRK

WRITES OF TRIP IN THE WEST

Pocatello, Idaho.

Dear Mitchell and Dear Old Mexico Friends:—

You know Missouri is the best state in the Union and Mexico is the best town in the State of Missouri. She has the churches, the schools, the factories, the railroads and the people and everything.

Wife and I left Mexico June the 20th and came to Boulder, Colorado. Stayed there five days and came on to Pocatello, Idaho, and we feel like we have gone around the world for we traveled in a 1917 Buick car.

We met some deer, wolves and coyotes on the road. Our road was good almost all the way here. A little newly worked road was eight inches of dust. From the observation of all the roads we have seen we think a hard surfaced road the best.

Would rather pay \$50 annually for license and have a smooth hard surfaced road than pay \$7 annual license on roads like some are. If Missouri roads were carefully looked after and graded, dragged and drained, then oiled, she would have a fine surfaced road that would have that velvet top, soft riding, easy on. As cars in every way and would be economical in construction.

The best road is cement covered with one-half to three-fourths of an inch of asphalt. I have seen a casing which had traveled 24,000 miles on this kind of a road without a defect. One thing I notice in building a road, not to have too broad a crown.

There are all kinds of good roads in these western states and they brag wonderfully about them, and also about the wonderful crops they raise and hot at our country in the East. Especially if we are a little dry. They say we irrigate. Now who paid for this irrigation? The Government. They taxed us in the East and today if the Government did not keep up the dams and reservoirs aches country would be unable to maintain herself.

Scenery is about all they have here. They build rock and gravel roads so we easterners will come in and spend a little money. The tourist keeps up the country in many sections. There are 2 tourist camps here and every evening they are filled with cars.

We went to an Indian powwow held at the Hall Indian Reservation. It is what they call the Sun Dance. They begin dancing at sunset on a given date and continue without food or water for three days and three nights. It is called a religious act of some kind, but it seems there is no one able to explain just what it means. All their preparations are made with certain ceremonies, sacred to their belief. We saw deer, wolves, and coyotes on our way out here. If I had met a bear, would have turned around and come back to Mexico.

They have deer, mountain goats, bear, cougar, bob cats and other game here. But you know I have not lost any bear or cougar. I may take chances with goat or deer or prairie chicken or sage hens, but would rather sit on the bank of the Snake River and catch a yellow catfish. They have the mountain trout and speckled trout here and everybody is crazy about catching them. But a tourist has to pay \$5.00 for a fishing and hunting license while a native pays only \$2. Someone told me that I had been here long enough to be naturalized. Our Government helps the Indians build all their big ditches for irrigation, makes their reservoirs and then Mr. Visitor has to pay \$5 to cast a line and stand on the bank and get mosquito bitten.

Best wishes to all Missourians and especially Mexicans.

Yours truly, W. A. NEWKIRK.

WOMAN MAY OPPOSE REED AS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE

ST. LOUIS, Aug. 8.—Mrs. W. W. Martin of Fayette, prominent in Missouri Democratic circles, Monday was suggested as a possible independent candidate in the United States senatorial campaign in the November election against Senator James A. Reed, the Democratic nominee, and R. R. Brewster, the Republican candidate.

The suggestion was made by W. D. Vandiver, an ex-congressman, at a conference of anti-Reed Democrats to put an independent candidate in the field.

Mr. and Mrs. P. H. Cullen, of St. Louis, are Mexico visitors.

BUNDRIDGE BROTHERS SENTENCED TO PRISON MONDAY AFTERNOON

Walter Bundridge of Moberly was sentenced to ten years in the State Penitentiary by Judge A. W. Walker Monday afternoon on charges of embezzlement and other crimes and misdemeanors in connection with the failure of the Farmers and Merchants Bank. His brother, Vern, was given five years for similar offenses.

Cousin Dies in St. Louis.

H. A. Prych received a message Tuesday morning telling of the death of his cousin, Charles Schavis, in St. Louis. The funeral will be at 2:30 Wednesday afternoon.

## SHERIFF RETURNS FROM WEST WITH FOUR—CHARGES ARE FILED

Sheriff Chal Blum and Mrs. J. E. Blum are home from Denver, Colo., and Cheyenne, Wyo., with Roy Clark, Maud Kelley, M. L. Pitts and Frances Robinson. Charges have been filed against the men for violating a statutory offense and against the girls for delinquency. As soon as Judge Gantt returns Prosecuting Attorney Frank Hollingsworth will ask for a special session of the Circuit Court to hear the pleas in the case.

WHAT FERTILIZER.

We are taking orders for fertilizer now and can make prices to interest you.

PRODUCERS GRAIN CO. d1 w1 Advertisement

A. P. Green has gone to Colorado Springs to visit his family. He expects to bring them home the last of August.

WANTED:—A middle aged woman for farm housekeeping for family of three. Apply at 701 Baker Street, after five o'clock. T. J. ECTON d1 w1

J. W. Lee is visiting his daughter, Mrs. C. E. Shoemaker, of Bethany, Mo., Mrs. Lee and Frank Lee leave Sunday for Bethany for a short visit and to bring Mr. Lee home. His condition continues to improve nicely.

The front of the Pasqueth building, occupied by Dallmeyer's, is being painted.

J. W. Varner of Columbia was in Mexico Tuesday.

J. W. Elliott of Fulton transacted business in Mexico Tuesday.

Miss Lola Tinsley, who is employed at the office of the circuit clerk is on a vacation of several weeks.

Mr. and Mrs. R. B. Kerr left Tuesday for a two weeks' vacation in Yellowstone Park.

In the state of W. O. Hostetter, the executors file petition asking for an order to sell Liberty Bonds and other personal property.

TANKAGE.